# *Formative Evaluation of the International Academic Mobility Initiative*

**Final Report**

*Evaluation and Data Development*
*Strategic Policy*
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# *Executive Summary*

The goals of the International Academic Mobility (IAM) Initiative are to advance the development of international skills, knowledge and understanding among students and promote academic co-operation and institutional linkages among colleges and universities.

The IAM Initiative includes the administration of two programs created by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) in 1995: the Canada-European Community Program for Co-operation in Higher Education and Training, and the Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education. These programs support consortium-based initiatives that are developed and carried out by Canadian universities and colleges in collaboration with institutions in other countries.

## *Evaluation Process and Methodology*

The purpose of the formative evaluation was to assess the relevance, design and delivery, and the short-term benefits of the two IAM programs.

The evaluation focused on projects accepted for funding between 1995 and 1998. During these years, IAM funded 30 projects under the Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education and 25 projects under the Canada-European Community Program for Co-operation in Higher Education and Training.

The methodology used to conduct the formative evaluation included a literature review and surveys of Canadian project directors and educational partners, Canadian applicants, and participating Canadian students.

## *Main Findings*

A summary of the main findings for the evaluation issues is presented below. The reader should note, however, that these findings should be viewed as being for the respondents to the surveys rather than for the larger population of IAM participants or unsuccessful applicants.

**Caution: Practical difficulties encountered in building the survey samples for the three surveys conducted for the formative evaluation resulted in small sample sizes. This limits inference to the population of IAM participants and biases the findings towards the few projects that participated in the surveys.**

### a) Relevance

The 40 surveyed faculty members believe that there is a continuing need for the IAM Initiative to promote student mobility.

The 29 surveyed unsuccessful applicants agreed that the IAM Initiative remains relevant and few of them (10 percent) found alternative funding to implement their projects after being denied IAM funding.

Two-thirds of surveyed students indicated that they would have looked for other exchange opportunities had their IAM project not been available, but few (8 percent) believe that they would have had the opportunity to study abroad in the absence of the IAM project.

### b) Program Design and Delivery

#### *Reaching Institutions and Students*

The surveyed faculty members reported three primary sources for their knowledge of IAM: other faculty (43 percent), IAM promotional materials (28 percent), and university or college administration (15 percent). A slight majority of the surveyed students (54 percent) reported hearing about the IAM project from a faculty member, while others (16 percent) learned about IAM through recruitment posters or flyers, their academic department (17 percent), and from their international studies office (12 percent).

The average stipend that surveyed students reported receiving was about $2,160 (with a range of 0 to $6,000). On average, the stipend covered about 77 percent of the incremental costs (identified by the students) of studying abroad.

The IAM projects in the survey had an average of about $147,000 in IAM funding. The surveyed faculty members reported that, on average, IAM funding covered slightly less than three-quarters of their project's cost. The surveyed faculty members also reported having to limit the number of students who could participate because of funding limitations.

Less than half (45 percent) of the surveyed unsuccessful applicants said that they would not apply again to IAM.

#### *Design Elements*

The surveyed faculty members and unsuccessful applicants thought the clarity of the application process could be improved, particularly in the areas of selection criteria and administrative requirements.

The surveyed faculty members criticised the IAM programs for funding only new projects. They wanted renewable funding for successful projects in order to build on those projects' successes. Also, some of the surveyed faculty members wanted the duration of funding extended, citing the time needed to establish a functioning partnership.

Half of the surveyed faculty members reported being "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with their overall experience in administering a project under the IAM Initiative, while one quarter were "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied".

Overall, the surveyed faculty members were satisfied with their experiences collaborating with their partner institutions.

About two-thirds of the surveyed students and faculty members indicated that orientation courses were offered to prepare students for the exchange. Eighty-seven percent of the surveyed students who received the orientation courses found them to be at least "somewhat helpful", with almost one-third of the course recipients finding them "very helpful".

The surveyed students and faculty reported that the students experienced few problems with getting academic credit for their studies or work abroad.

### c) Short-Term Benefits

#### *Perceived Institution Effects*

The surveyed faculty members rated IAM's contribution to establishing partnerships and enhancing existing partnerships as important to their institution.

Formal collaboration occurred most often in the areas of academic credit recognition and transfer agreements, common curriculum materials, common courses or course modules, and faculty or staff exchanges.

About two-thirds (68 percent) of the surveyed faculty members reported that the collaboration with their partner institutions continued after IAM funding ceased.

#### *Perceived Student Effects*

Overall, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of the surveyed students were "very satisfied" with their exchange experience. Only one percent was not satisfied.

Most (75 percent) of the surveyed students agreed with the statement that their IAM experience helped them with their other academic programs. Also, almost half of the surveyed students believe that their academic progress abroad was greater than it would have been at their home institutions.

Most of the surveyed student participants now employed full-time reported that their job is related to the studies or work they did in the IAM project (82 percent), and that they are using skills learned in the IAM project (88 percent).

Non-mobile students became involved in the project in many ways, but primarily through taking courses developed with the partner institutions. Non-mobile students benefited from the international dimension of the jointly developed courses.

## Conclusion

The small sample sizes limit any inference from the survey results to the population of IAM participants and unsuccessful applicants as a whole. Some tentative conclusions are possible, however, based on the literature review and the information gathered by the formative evaluation:

- The concept of international student exchange is widely supported within the academic community. Both faculty and students endorse the concept, as do studies of international exchange in other countries.
- It is difficult to identify outcomes in terms of changes to career choice or career progress, but most students believe the experience was beneficial.
- Consideration could be given to renewable funding for successful projects. The program will benefit from having experienced faculty run projects. To ensure access to a wider number of faculty members, the program could limit the number of awards within any five-year period.
- Unsuccessful project applicants require additional feedback. These applicants should be viewed as a resource that with some coaching will become proponents of successful projects.

# *LLD Response to IAM Formative Evaluation Report*

**May 1, 2002**

## *Introduction*

This formative evaluation was undertaken to assess the relevance, design and delivery, and short term impacts of the Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education, and the Canada-European Community Program for Co-operation in Higher Education and Training, which are administered under the International Academic Mobility Initiative. The evaluation process was initiated in 2000, five years after the programs started operation, and examined projects that were approved between 1995-1998.

The Learning and Literacy Directorate (LLD) has reviewed the formative evaluation report that was recently completed. While sample sizes were not sufficient to be statistically reliable, nonetheless, we are still pleased with the overall findings and the insight that was provided on the IAM Initiative.

## *Positive Findings*

Many of the findings throughout the report are positive. For example, participating faculty and students confirm that there is a continuing need to encourage international linkages and mobility activities within Canada's post-secondary institutions, and that IAM continues to be relevant in providing funding and a framework for supporting these activities. Faculty surveyed for the evaluation noted that IAM provides unique linkage and mobility opportunities that go beyond traditional bilateral exchange arrangements, and encourage innovation in international learning programs.

The evaluation report indicates that projects are involving not only students who study abroad at partner institutions, but also a high number of students who do not study abroad. These non-mobile students benefit from the international dimension that the project brings to their education through, for example, taking courses for which the curriculum has been jointly developed with international partners.

For the students who do study abroad, the financial stipend that they receive under IAM program is intended to assist with the incremental costs of studying abroad, above and beyond what the student would normally pay to pursue their education at their home institution. LLD was pleased to note that the average stipend that surveyed students reported receiving covers 77% of the incremental costs that they identified. This is important, since 63% of surveyed students reported being recipients of some form of student loans.

Faculty reported considerable success in reaching agreements for credit transfer and recognition, and half of these faculties indicated that these agreements would benefit future students. Surveyed students reported little difficulty in receiving credit for their study or internships abroad. As well, most faculties reported that collaboration with their partners has continued since their IAM funding ended.

Surveyed students reported improved language skills, knowledge of other cultures, and improved knowledge of international issues as a result of participating in IAM projects. Students also reported personal benefits including better ability to adapt to new situations.

## Areas for Improvement

The IAM formative evaluation report also identified several areas where improvements could be made, particularly in the clarity of IAM's application guidelines and selection processes. IAM guidelines, application procedures and selection processes are developed in co-operation with our international partner governments, and are reviewed annually to ensure clarity. While many improvements have been made since the early days of the initiative, we continue to refine the guidelines and selection processes based on comments received from our sponsors at Project Directors' Meetings and from members of our External Review Committee.

The report also identifies measures that would assist IAM in developing strong methodologies for a future summative evaluation of the program. These measures included continuous monitoring of students and faculty during and after project implementation, the use of a standard annual report template for project directors, and obtaining informed consent to contact students in the future for program evaluation purposes.

IAM is already in the process of implementing many of these measures in response to internal program management review processes that occurred before or concurrently with the formative evaluation. These review processes included the Program Management Initiative (2000), the renewal of the Learning Initiatives Terms and Conditions under which the program operates (2000), and an audit that was conducted by HRDC's Internal Audit Bureau (2001).

A Results-Based Accountability Framework, outlining measurable performance measures for IAM's programs, was developed as part of the renewal of the Terms and Conditions. As part of this process, IAM has developed student surveys and annual report templates that will permit continuous collection of comparable data on student experiences and project activities. Responses will be entered into a database that can be used in future evaluations. These tools are now in the process of being implemented and we will be in constant contact with our partners to monitor the extent to which they are user friendly and can be easily implemented.

IAM has drafted a participant information form that students will voluntarily complete to provide consent for HRDC to contact them in the future for the purpose of evaluating IAM's programs. This form will be reviewed by HRDC's privacy office, as well as our partnering institutions, to ensure that it complies with privacy laws both of the federal government and the post-secondary institutions that will be involved. Once finalised, this will assist in developing future survey frames.

## Conclusion

At the first meeting of the IAM Steering Committee on March 23, 2001, a decision was made to revise the methodology that had been included in the Terms of Reference. Case studies and key informant interviews were replaced with a greater emphasis on the student survey, in an attempt to gather preliminary information on short-term benefits. While this change in methodology provided a series of "lessons learned" that will guide the development of future summative evaluation survey methodologies, LLD notes that it will also be important to include methodologies such as case studies and key informant interviews in future evaluations of IAM. This will be particularly important if establishing a statistically reliable sample of faculty and students continues to prove to be difficult.

# 1. Introduction

The goals of the International Academic Mobility (IAM) Initiative are to advance the development of international skills, knowledge and understanding among students and promote academic co-operation and institutional linkages among colleges and universities.

The IAM Initiative includes the administration of two programs created by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) in 1995: the Canada-European Community Program for Co-operation in Higher Education and Training, and the Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education. These programs support consortium-based initiatives that are developed and carried out by Canadian universities and colleges in collaboration with institutions in other countries.

A formative evaluation was initiated in 2000 to assess the relevance, design and delivery, and short-term impacts of the two IAM programs. The formative evaluation also considered methodological issues, with particular emphasis on suggesting a design for the summative evaluations of the IAM programs.

The formative evaluation focused on projects accepted for funding between 1995 and 1998. During these years, IAM funded 30 projects under the Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education and 25 projects under the Canada-European Community Program for Co-operation in Higher Education and Training. To date, approximately 2,800 students have participated in the IAM programs, and about 1,500 of those students are estimated to have participated between 1995 and 1998.

The methodology used to conduct the formative evaluation included a literature review, a survey of project directors and educational partners, a survey of unsuccessful Canadian applicants, and a survey of participating Canadian students.

**Caution: Practical difficulties encountered in building the survey samples for the three surveys conducted for this evaluation resulted in small sample sizes. The reader should note that the small sample size for each survey limits inference to the population of IAM participants, and biases the findings towards the few projects that participated in the surveys. Therefore, the reader must not draw inferences to the larger population of IAM participants or unsuccessful applicants based on the survey results presented in this report.**[1]

## 1.1 Overview of the IAM Programs

Various *consortia* of Canadian universities and colleges, in collaboration with institutions in other countries, can apply for funding under the IAM programs to support their collaborative projects. A project typically consists of activities such as curriculum

[1] The report refers to the "surveyed students," the "surveyed faculty members," or the "surveyed unsuccessful applicants" to highlight the fact that these findings are based on very small samples, and the results describe only the survey respondents.

development and the exchange process where Canadian students would study abroad. In some cases, students do not travel abroad (non-mobile students) but participate in other ways, such as through courses intended to increase their exposure to other cultures. A project director, usually a faculty member at a university or college, leads the project as part of the team of educational partners (faculty at other universities and colleges) that are included in the consortium for the project.

## The Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education

HRDC and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade announced the Program for North American Mobility in Higher Education (referred to in this report as Canada-NA Program) in June 1995. The Program is a partnership among the member governments of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It is a direct response to the commitment made in NAFTA to "*strengthen the special bonds of friendship and co-operation*" between Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Since its inception, the Canada-NA Program has funded 50 projects (30 of which are part of this evaluation), in which approximately 1066 students have participated from 48 Canadian post-secondary institutions (this figure includes 33 universities, 11 community colleges, and 4 university colleges).[2] Five non-academic partners have also participated.

## The Canada-European Community Program for Co-operation in Higher Education and Training

Announced at the end of 1995, the Canada-European Community Program for Co-operation in Higher Education and Training (referred to in this report as Canada-EC Program) also implements the objectives of a larger international agreement. In 1990, the Government of Canada and the member state governments of the European Community, now European Union (EU), adopted the Transatlantic Declaration. The Declaration was a response to the world events of 1989 and recognition that "*transatlantic solidarity has played a historic role in preserving peace and freedom.*" Among its many commitments, the Declaration included the strengthening of exchanges and joint projects, "*including academic and youth exchanges.*" The Canada-EC Program is a direct result of that commitment.

To date, the Canada-EC Program has funded 45 projects (25 are part of this evaluation) with approximately 1,725 students from over 56 Canadian academic institutions (this figure includes 42 universities, 11 community colleges, and 3 university colleges).[3] Twenty-eight non-academic partners have also participated.

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[2] The number of students is based on the number of students who will travel abroad as projected in the project proposals. Non-mobile students who remain at home but will participate through such activities as joint curricula development are not included. All numbers are for 1995 to the present.

[3] Please see footnote 2, above.

## 1.2 Evaluation Issues

The formative evaluation of the two IAM programs was guided by the following eight evaluation issues.

1. Is there a continuing need to encourage exchange and co-operation among higher education institutions internationally? Is there still a need to prepare students for working in a global economy?

2. What are the role and the nature of involvement of the IAM Initiative in encouraging exchanges and co-operation among higher education institutions from various countries?

3. Would the participating institutions have been able to make progress in internationalizing their institution and/or strengthening student mobility if they had not had access to IAM funding?

4. Has IAM encouraged international exchange and co-operation among Canadian higher education institutions (universities and colleges)? Specifically, in regard to:

   - setting up new multilateral partnerships between educational institutions and enhancing existing ones;
   - skills development and international academic work credit;
   - the development of common and/or shared curricula; and
   - the exchange of expertise and knowledge in new developments in higher education and training, including distance learning?

5. Has IAM improved the quality of human resource development among mobile and non-mobile students at participating institutions? Specifically, in regard to:

   - increasing students' knowledge of languages, cultures, and institutions;
   - providing affordable access to an "internationalized" curricula;
   - providing work placements/internships in a "foreign" milieu; and
   - partnerships beyond the educational field to include businesses, professional associations, public authorities, etc.?

6. Are the partnerships created through the IAM program continuing beyond the program funding? What mechanisms are being used to promote sustainability?

7. Has IAM reached targeted institutions' faculties and students?

8. Are there design elements that constitute obstacles to effective implementation? If so, can and how could they be changed?

## 1.3 Overview of the Report

This report presents the main findings of the formative evaluation and includes the following:

- An overview of the methodology used to conduct the formative evaluation;
- A profile of the respondents to the surveys and their IAM projects;
- A summary of the findings for each evaluation issue;
- Recommendations for the summative evaluation of the IAM Initiative, based upon the experiences of this evaluation; and
- A brief overview of the main conclusions.

# 2. Methodology

This section provides highlights of the multiple lines of evidence developed for the formative evaluation, some of the challenges encountered, and profile information that presents a picture of the surveys' respondents.

## 2.1 Multiple Lines of Evidence

The formative evaluation obtained its findings from multiple lines of evidence. A summary of each methodology is presented below. Readers interested in more detail can request the evaluation's technical reports from the Evaluation and Data Development Branch of HRDC.

### *Literature Review*

The literature review focused on reviewing literature on the perceived benefits of academic mobility on students and academic institutions. The available literature was compiled from an Internet scan, on-line document retrieval services, web-based bibliographies, databases for periodicals, and several library catalogues (public and university).

### *Survey of Canadian Project Directors and Educational Partners*

The evaluation included a mail survey with 125 project directors and educational partners identified through the IAM database. The overall response rate for the survey of project directors and educational partners was 32 percent (40 of 125). The group response rates were 52 percent for project directors (25 of 48) and 19 percent for educational partners (15 of 77).[4]

### *Survey of Unsuccessful Canadian Applicants*

The evaluation included a fax survey with 114 unsuccessful applicants identified in IAM administrative files. Of the 114 identified unsuccessful applicants, 29 responded to the survey for a response rate of 25 percent.

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[4] Because project directors had more direct contact with students, they will typically have more detailed knowledge about all aspects of the project and student participation. Also, since the responses between the two groups did not yield statistically significant differences, they are combined in the report of the survey's findings.

### *Survey of Participating Canadian Students*

The evaluation included a telephone survey of 113 students who registered by telephone, mail-in card, or the Internet. Non-mobile students were not targeted by this survey.

The following strategy was implemented to build the sample for the survey of participating Canadian students: 1) Project directors and educational partners received letters from HRDC requesting that they send names of students participating between 1995 and 1998 to the registrar of the institution; 2) Simultaneously, registrars received letters identifying the faculty who would be sending the names plus a request that packages prepared for the purpose of the evaluation be sent to the student's permanent address of record (typically a parent). These packages contained a letter to the parent requesting their assistance in locating the student by forwarding a letter; and, 3) Students received letters from their parents inviting them to register for a survey by phone (toll free line), mail, or through a web site.

Of the estimated 1,500 students who participated in IAM between 1995 and 1998, 161 registered for the survey and 113 completed interviews (after multiple attempts to make contact).

## 2.2 Evaluation Challenges

Given the amount of time that has passed since the programs were initiated in 1995/1996, a decision was made at the IAM Evaluation Steering Committee meeting to include some of the elements of a summative evaluation in the formative evaluation. Specifically it was decided to attempt to measure early impacts, and it was hoped that lessons drawn from the consideration of early impacts would inform the future summative evaluations on how to measure longer-term impacts.

A number of difficulties were encountered during the course of the formative evaluation.

In the case of the literature review:

- There were very few evaluations of the incremental benefits of academic mobility programs. Those that exist tend to focus on the short-term effects on students and on students' satisfaction with their exchange experience. In addition, the scope of the literature is restricted to studies of student mobility in the university setting.
- The studies had methodological limitations. First, most studies rely on self-reported data, with no external check to determine the effects of academic mobility on students. Second, none of the studies use a comparison group of non-exchange students. Whether the effects reported by exchange students are experienced to a similar degree in non-exchange students remains unanswered.

In the case of the three surveys:

- Three years had elapsed between the conclusion of some projects and the start of the evaluation. The IAM database was not systematically updated after project conclusion

and the *contact information for some project directors and educational partners and unsuccessful applicants was invalid.*

- While most project directors could supply names of the participating students, information on the *current or parental address of the students was unavailable.*
- Confidentiality policies at many universities and colleges required an informed consent process. This requirement was coordinated through an information flow from faculty members to registrars to the parents of students and finally to the students.
- The amount of time already devoted to the administration of the project by the preparation of the annual report and participation in the audit process were indicated as reasons for not participating in the surveys.
- Faculty may have little incentive to spend time on surveys since they become involved in IAM programs from an altruistic motive to offer students the opportunity to study abroad. The IAM Initiative does not directly fund academic research or publication.

**Caution: The survey results presented in this report involve small sample sizes for each of the surveys. This limits inference to the population of IAM participants and biases the findings towards the few projects that participated in the surveys. Therefore, the reader must not draw inferences to the larger population of IAM participants or unsuccessful applicants based on the survey results presented in this report.**

## 2.3 Profiles

This section examines profile information to provide a picture of the respondents to the surveys and their IAM projects.

### *Profile of the Projects*

Faculty from 33 of the 55 IAM projects participated in the survey. Their responses provide the following overview of project characteristics:

- The projects covered a variety of disciplines, with agricultural and natural resources (18 percent), biological sciences (15 percent), and five other areas (business management, education, engineering and applied sciences, social sciences, and health professions and occupations at 12 percent each) heading the list.
- The foreign academic partners are dominated by the United States and Mexico, the only two foreign partners in the Canada-NA Program. Partners in the Canada-EC Program are from 14 of the 15 member states of the EU, with France and Sweden having the most academic partners. Few of the projects in the survey had non-academic partners. Table 1 provides the number of academic and non-academic partners by country for the 33 projects.

**Table 1**
**Consortium partners from 33 IAM projects and student flows by country**

| | # of academic partners | # of non-academic partners | # of students |
|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 64 | 10 | |
| Mexico | 26 | 2 | 109 |
| United States | 24 | 2 | 88 |
| France | 6 | 3 | 57 |
| Sweden | 6 | - | 43 |
| United Kingdom | 5 | - | 29 |
| Netherlands | 5 | - | 26 |
| Germany | 3 | - | 24 |
| Spain | 4 | - | 19 |
| Belgium | 4 | - | 14 |
| Ireland | 2 | - | 11 |
| Denmark | 1 | - | 7 |
| Portugal | 2 | - | 5 |
| Finland | 3 | - | 4 |
| Austria | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Italy | 2 | - | 2 |
| Greece | 1 | - | |
| Other | 2 | 1 | |
| Total | 161 | 19 | |

Source: Survey of project directors and educational partners (n=40)

- Students could participate in projects as mobile students, who go abroad to a "host institution" for study, research or work. The total number of mobile students travelling to each country is shown in Table 1. Alternatively, students could participate in projects as non-mobile students, who participate in the project while remaining at their Canadian institution (the "home institution"). Based on the faculty survey, a median of 11 mobile and 5 non-mobile students participated in the project from each institution. The distribution of mobile and non-mobile students participating in a project from each institution is provided in Table 2. Most institutions had fewer than 10 students participating in a project; 3 percent of the surveyed faculty members reported that their institution had over 41 mobile students in an IAM project.

**Table 2**
**Number of mobile students and non-mobile students reported by faculty members (n=40)**

| | Mobile students | | Non-mobile students | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | # of faculty reporting | % | # of faculty reporting | % |
| 0-10 students | 18 | 45% | 16 | 40% |
| 11-20 students | 12 | 30% | 4 | 10% |
| 21-40 students | 6 | 15% | 3 | 8% |
| 41-60 students | 1 | 3% | 2 | 5% |
| 61 or more | - | 0% | 2 | 5% |
| Don't know | 3 | 8% | 13 | 33% |

Source: Survey of project directors and educational partners
Note: Totals may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding

- The average stay abroad for mobile students was 20.2 weeks, with a median of 9 weeks, showing that a few extended stays occurred (a maximum of 108 weeks in one case). Sixty percent (n=24) of faculty reported student sojourns of 18 weeks or less.

- Half (53 percent or n=21) of the surveyed faculty members reported having students in internships (which includes employment or fieldwork) while abroad. The average internship experience reported was 10.6 weeks.

## Profile of Surveyed Project Directors and Educational Partners

On average, the surveyed faculty members (n=40) have taught at the post-secondary level for 21.4 years and at their current institutions for 17.6 years. A slight majority (53 percent or n=21) are full professors and almost one-fifth (15 percent or n=6) are associate professors. None were assistant professors.

The project directors and educational partners appear to receive substantial external funding, with an average of 52 percent of their current research and/or teaching funded by agencies outside of their post-secondary institution.

Three-quarters (78 percent or n=31) of the surveyed faculty members were engaged in collaborative research with foreign institutions during 1998-2001. Overall, just over a quarter (28 percent) of faculty members' research involved international collaboration.

## Profile of the Surveyed Unsuccessful Applicants

In the case of respondents to the survey of unsuccessful applicants (n=29), three (10 percent) applied to the Canada-NA Program, twenty (69 percent) applied to the Canada-EC Program, and six (21 percent) applied to both programs between 1995 and 1998. Most applicants applied once (48 percent or n=14) or twice (38 percent or n=11) to one of the IAM programs during this time period. Few applied more than twice (10 percent or n=3). Four respondents withdrew an application during 1995-98. Five respondents reported having at least one successful application to IAM during 1995-98; however, none of these respondents appeared in the IAM database of project directors and educational partners, nor were they identified participants during the evaluation's contacts with other participating faculty members.

## Profile of Surveyed Participating Students

The completed interviews with participating Canadian students (n=113) provides the following profile information for the survey's respondents.

### Academic Profile

The interviewed students came from 28 Canadian post-secondary institutions.

Ninety-four percent (n=106) of the surveyed students participated in an IAM project in the same area as their major or area of concentration. While the surveyed students had a variety of academic majors or areas of concentration, the areas with the greatest concentration of survey respondents are in law (17 percent or n=19), engineering and applied science (13 percent or n=15), and agriculture or natural resources (12 percent or n=14).

Two-thirds (67 percent or n=76) of the surveyed students were undergraduates at the time of their participation in an IAM project. Three-quarters (76 percent or n=86) were beyond the second year of their degree program.

Almost half of the respondents (47 percent or n=53) reported an average grade of A- or better, and another third (32 percent or n=36) reported a B+ average at the time they applied for the IAM project. Few had an average grade of less than B (2 percent or n=2).

### Participation Profile

All of the surveyed students went abroad as part of their IAM project: 70 percent (n=79) studied abroad; 21 percent (n=24) studied and did an internship abroad; 5 percent (n=6) worked or did an internship abroad; 4 percent (n=4) did not take formal courses but went abroad for other academic activities (e.g., for a conference, to do research).

Surveyed students reported a median stay abroad of 16 weeks, with a range of one week to 80 weeks.

Sixty-four (57 percent) of the surveyed students were part of the Canada-NA Program and travelled to either the United States or Mexico. Forty-nine (43 percent) of the surveyed students participated in the Canada-EC Program, and over half (n=27 of 49) of them travelled to either Sweden or the United Kingdom.

### Personal Profile

Almost two-thirds of the surveyed students are women (64 percent or n=72).

Over half (53 percent or n=60) of the surveyed students are now working full-time, while a little more than a third (35 percent or n=39) are studying full-time.

The surveyed students who are employed full-time hold jobs in a variety of areas. The types of employment most reported by the students are: health or medicine (27 percent or n=16 of 60), sales or service industries (12 percent or n=7), and government (10 percent or n=6).

The annual income levels of the surveyed students who are currently working full-time (n=60) are provided in Table 3. No students working full-time reported making less than $20,000 per year.

| Table 3<br>Current income per annum for students now working full time (n=60) | | |
|---|---|---|
| | # | % |
| $20,001 to $35,000 | 14 | 23% |
| $35,001 to $50,000 | 24 | 40% |
| $50,001 to $75,000 | 17 | 28% |
| $75,001 to $100,000 | 1 | 2% |
| Don't know | 4 | 7% |
| Source: Survey of participating students | | |

More than 70 percent of the surveyed students reported that their parents made less than $75,000 a year. During their education, over two-thirds (67 percent or n=76) of the surveyed students received financial assistance from their parents. A similar percentage (63 percent or n=71) used student loans to help cover their educational costs.

# 3. Main Findings

This section presents the main findings obtained from multiple lines of evidence used to examine the evaluation issues for relevance, design and delivery, and short-term benefits. Given the small sample sizes, the results should be viewed as being for the respondents to the surveys rather than for the larger population of IAM participants or unsuccessful applicants.

## 3.1 Relevance

The formative evaluation examined three evaluation issues regarding relevance:

- Is there a continuing need to encourage exchange and co-operation among higher education institutions internationally? Is there still a need to prepare students for working in a global economy?
- What is the role and the nature of involvement of the IAM Initiative in encouraging exchanges and co-operation among higher education institutions from various countries?
- Would the participating institutions have been able to make progress in internationalizing their institution and/or strengthening student mobility if they had not had access to IAM funding?

### *Findings on Relevance*

**Although many Canadian post-secondary institutions have international exchange agreements, less than one percent of Canadian university students studied abroad during the 1997/98 academic year.**

**The surveyed faculty members believe that there is a continuing need for the IAM Initiative to promote student mobility. They cite the importance of IAM funding and that IAM provides unique opportunities, for example, to deepen exchange relationships and bring together a wide range of students.**

Eighty-eight percent of the surveyed faculty members reported that their institution or department participates in other non-IAM funded exchanges. Fifty-six percent (n=22) of the surveyed faculty members reported an increase in participation in non-IAM funded exchange programs in the last five years.

A recent study by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) also shows that institutional interest in providing exchange opportunities is high, with 90 percent of responding institutions indicating a medium or high interest in providing

student exchange experiences.[5] In 1999, Canadian universities were participating in almost 2,500 international exchange agreements. These agreements are providing exchange experiences for several thousand students a year. For example, during the 1997/98 academic year, institutions reported 5,058 Canadian students studying abroad as part of an exchange.[6] However, even this level of participation means that less than one percent of Canadian university students (full-time graduate and undergraduate students) were studying abroad in an exchange program during the 1997/98 academic year.

The AUCC study reports a need for continued funding of student mobility programs. This position is reinforced by a focus group conducted by HRDC/IAM with project directors in the Canada-NA Program.[7] The focus group study indicates that project directors believed that even with increasing participation in international activities by their universities/colleges, the Canada-NA Program is still needed to promote student mobility. The project directors noted that funding for international mobility continues to be scarce, and that most institutions still have room to improve their international programs.

Although the majority of the faculty members surveyed for the IAM evaluation are in institutions where exchange participation is on the rise, 77 percent of those faculty believe that IAM is still needed to support international exchange at their institution. When asked to explain why they believe that the IAM Initiative is still needed, the surveyed faculty members focused primarily on the importance of IAM funding but also noted that IAM provides unique opportunities, such as allowing institutions to enhance their programs and expertise through deepened relationships and bringing a wide range of students together.

**The surveyed unsuccessful applicants also agree that the IAM Initiative remains relevant. Their view is supported by the experience that few of them found alternative funding to implement their projects after being denied IAM funding.**

The respondents to the survey of unsuccessful applicants also noted the need for more funding for international exchanges. They unanimously agreed (n=29) that a continuing need exists to encourage international exchange programs and co-operation among higher education institutions internationally. They hold this view even though they reported that their departments and institutions already participate in student exchanges and that their own participation in international exchange programs has increased in the last five years.

The continued need for the funding of exchange projects is illustrated by the fact that over four-fifths (86 percent or n=25) of the surveyed unsuccessful applicants reported that their project did not proceed after being denied IAM funding. Only three of the

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[5] The following is based on information in Jane Knight, *Progress and Promise: The AUCC Report on Internationalization at Canadian Universities* (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2000).

[6] Knight notes that institutions are not systematically keeping this data, so this is an estimate.

[7] In March 2000, a focus group was held with 13 project directors in Austin, Texas during the annual project director's meeting for the Program for North American Mobility for Higher Education. The focus group comments (as summarized by the moderator) were used for developing the main evaluation issues of the current evaluation of the Canada-NA Program and the Canada-EC Program.

respondents (10 percent) found alternative funding for their projects, and all of them had to modify the projects due to lack of funds.[8]

The survey of unsuccessful applicants also appears to show a greater need for opportunities in more innovative areas of international exchange, which are areas supported by the IAM Initiative. Unsuccessful applicants reported most faculty involvement in the more traditional forms of international exchange (i.e., student exchanges, research with foreign partners, faculty exchange), while less traditional areas of international exchange had less faculty involvement. About a quarter of unsuccessful applicants reported participating in the development of shared or common curricula with foreign educational institutions or the development of joint degree programs during the past two years.

**The surveyed students indicated a substantial interest in student exchange, and two-thirds said that they would have looked for other exchange opportunities had their IAM project not been available. At the same time, however, the students appear to view exchange opportunities as limited and very few of them believe that they would have had the opportunity to study abroad in the absence of their IAM project.**

The questionnaire for participating students considered IAM's relevance by asking about the students' desire for exchange opportunities and what they would have done had the IAM exchange not been available. Over two-thirds (67 percent of n=76) of the surveyed students said that they would have looked for other student exchanges had the IAM project not been available. The continued need for IAM may be seen in the fact that only 8 percent (n=9) think that they would have studied abroad in the absence of their IAM project.

## 3.2 Program Design and Delivery

The formative evaluation examined two issues regarding design and delivery:

- Has IAM reached targeted institutions' faculties and students?
- Are there design elements that constitute obstacles to effective implementation? If so, can and how could they be changed?

### *Reaching Institutions and Students*

**The surveyed faculty members were from many different institutions, and the projects were in a variety of academic disciplines. The surveyed students were also from many institutions and academic fields of interest.**

[8] Three percent (n=1) of unsuccessful applicants did not respond to this question.

The project profile information presented in Section 2 indicated that the IAM projects were in a variety of disciplines including agricultural and natural resources, biological sciences, business management, education, engineering and applied sciences, social sciences, and health professions and occupations.

Also, Section 2 indicated that the surveyed students came from 28 post-secondary institutions. Their areas of study included law, engineering, applied science, agriculture and natural resources.

**The surveyed faculty members reported three primary sources for their knowledge of IAM: other faculty, IAM promotional materials, and university or college administration.**

**The surveyed faculty members reported having to limit the number of students who could participate because of funding limitations. Some faculty also reported difficulties with recruitment due to the stipend amount.**

Overall, surveyed faculty reported three primary sources for their knowledge of IAM: other faculty (43 percent or n=17), IAM promotional materials (28 percent or n=11), and university or college administration (15 percent or n=6). These results show that while investment in IAM promotional materials is well spent, there is also a strong "word of mouth" quality to how faculty members hear about the IAM Initiative (58 percent of faculty surveyed hear of IAM through other faculty and/or administrators).

Faculty recruited students mainly by advertising the program with posters/flyers (83 percent or n=33), personally approaching students (63 percent or n=25), announcing the project in class (73 percent or n=29), and asking other faculty to assist with recruiting (55 percent or n=22). A slight majority of the surveyed students (54 percent or n=61) reported hearing about the IAM project from a faculty member, while 16 percent (n=18) learned of IAM through recruitment posters or flyers. The surveyed students also learned about the project from their academic department (17 percent of n=19) and from their university or college international studies office (12 percent or n=14).

Less than half (40 percent or n=16) of the surveyed faculty members reported absolutely no obstacles in recruiting students, meaning that most had experienced some difficulties. These obstacles took many forms, including finding students available for an exchange (28 percent or n=11), the stipend amount (23 percent or n=9), difficulty finding qualified students (13 percent or n=5), home institutional structures, such as academic programs or curricula that made scheduling exchanges difficult (13 percent or n=5), and insufficient language skills (10 percent or n=4). In spite of the obstacles in recruiting, however, almost half (48 percent or n=19) of the faculty had to limit the number of mobile students accepted for the project.

**The surveyed students estimated that the cost of studying abroad through the IAM program was, on average, about $2,780 more that the cost of studying at the home institution for the same period of time. The average stipend for the surveyed students was about $2,160 (with a range of 0 to $6,000). Therefore, on average, the stipend covered about 77 percent of the incremental costs (identified by the students) of participating in IAM.**

The evaluation conducted by the European Union of its Co-operation Programme in Higher Education and Training between the European Community and Canada (the EU's title for its side of the Canada-EC Program) found that a significant proportion of the costs of studying abroad are borne by the individual student and family.

The surveys of participating students and faculty conducted for the IAM evaluation also found that the student pays much of the cost of studying abroad.[9] [10]

- Almost two-thirds (64 percent or n=72) of surveyed students reported that the cost of the IAM project was higher than the cost of studying at their home institution for the same period of time. Surveyed students estimated that on average, the incremental cost of participating in IAM was $2,778 (median of $2,000).

- The surveyed students reported an average stipend of $2,162. The stipend amount ranged from zero (8 percent or n=9) to $6,000 (1 percent or n=1). These figures appear to be in agreement with the amounts reported by surveyed faculty: an average stipend of $2,870, with the amounts ranging from $1,000 to $5,400.

- The stipends received by the surveyed students did not cover the full cost of participation in the exchange. Students reported an average cost (excluding reimbursements and travel costs) of $4,798 (median cost of $3,500), and 82 percent (n=85) stated that the stipend did not completely cover their costs associated with the IAM project.[11]

- A minority of students (34 percent or n=38) said they found additional funding to offset the costs of the exchange. These surveyed students averaged $4,654 in outside funding, with a median amount of $2,500. Most reported outside funding from bursaries or scholarships (24 percent or n=9 or 38), student loans (16 percent or n=6), university or college funds (13 percent or n=5), and parents/family (8 percent or n=3).

- Faculty used very different methods for determining the amount of funding to be awarded to students. The three most common methods are: basing the decision on the cost of the project to the student (38 percent or n=15); giving each student identical amounts (20 percent or n=8); and determining the amount based on the projects budget (15 percent or n=6).

**The surveyed faculty members reported that IAM funding covered slightly less than three quarters of their project's costs.**

The projects in the survey had an average of $147,283 in funding. This amount covered, on average, 73 percent of the total project cost. Table 4 shows the allocation of the

[9] It should be noted that for this evaluation, the evaluator cannot comment on the relative wealth of student participants or their parents due to the small sample size.

[10] The survey asked students to provide an estimate of the overall cost to them of the exchange project. Students were told to exclude any amounts for which they were reimbursed (i.e. the stipend) or that were spent on pleasure travel. Students were then asked if this was more than they would have spent at their home institution and, if so, how much more.

[11] Base for question is the students who received a stipend.

project funding reported by the surveyed faculty members. Many of the survey respondents did not know or did not respond to this question, however.

**Table 4**
**Allocation of funding for projects (n=33)**

| | Actual expenditures [Mean percentage] |
|---|---|
| Student mobility and related costs | 60% |
| Faculty-staff travel | 21% |
| Administrative support | 10% |
| Curriculum development and distance learning | 6% |
| Promotional materials | 1% |
| Costs of hosting partner meetings | 4% |
| Other costs | 8% |

Source: Survey of project directors and educational partners
Note: Means do not include "don't know" and "no response" answers.
Base: Projects of the surveyed faculty members.

Slightly over half (55 percent or 18/33) of the projects in the survey received funding from IAM only. Thirteen projects reported additional sources of funding, which were mainly from other partner institutions or the general budget of their post-secondary institution.[12]

**Almost half of the surveyed unsuccessful applicants said that they would not apply again to IAM. All of them considered the application process too time consuming, and many either did not receive feedback on why their application was rejected or did not consider the reasons given to be appropriate.**

When the unsuccessful applicants were asked if they would apply to the IAM Initiative in the future, a little over one-third (35 percent or n=10) responded that they would definitely apply again. Forty-five percent (n=13) reported that they would not apply again and they gave the following reasons:

- The application process is too time consuming (n=13, which corresponds to all of those who said that they would not apply again);
- The decision process seems unfair and arbitrary (n=8 of 13);
- The consortium partner requirements are too difficult to comply with (n=7 of 13);
- Funding for projects is insufficient (n=5 of 13); and
- The requirement for academic partner contributions is a burden (n=3 of 13).

Also, many of the surveyed unsuccessful applicants found feedback on their applications lacking. Over half (52 percent or n=15) of the unsuccessful applicants reported not receiving reasons for the rejection of their application. Among the group that did receive

[12] Circa Group, The Evaluation of the Co-operation Programme in Higher Education and Training Between the European Community and Canada (contracted by E.U. Directorate General XXII, 1999).

reasons for their rejection (45 percent or n=13), over three-fifths (62 percent or n=8 of 13) did not consider the reasons for their application's rejection appropriate.

## Design Elements

**The surveyed faculty members and unsuccessful applicants thought the clarity of the application process could be improved, particularly in the areas of selection criteria and administrative requirements.**

Both the surveyed faculty members and unsuccessful applicants were asked to comment on the application process. The results of the two surveys were very similar. Both groups found the clarity of the IAM guidelines and forms to rate less than 4.0 (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "very unclear" and 5 means "very clear").[13] They considered eligibility requirements and the types of costs covered to be the most clearly presented elements of the application forms and guidelines. The lowest rated items by the faculty members were selection criteria (3.2) and administrative requirements (3.1). For the unsuccessful applicants, it was activities eligible for support (3.4) and selection criteria (2.9).

**The surveyed faculty members criticized the IAM programs for funding only new projects. They wanted renewable funding for successful projects in order to build on those projects' successes.**

**Also, the surveyed faculty members were neutral about the level and the duration of project funding.**

When asked about their level of agreement with the program elements of IAM (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 5 means "strongly agree"), the surveyed faculty members evidenced mild agreement, with no program element rating a 4.0 or above. Faculty members:

- Had the most positive reaction to the requirement of a national distribution of partners (mean of 3.6);
- Were essentially neutral on the level and duration of project funding, with current funding levels receiving a 3.3, and funding duration and the required institutional contribution receiving 3.0 ratings; and
- Disagreed with the requirement that funding was only available for new projects (i.e., no funding to continue a pre-existing project), with this element receiving a 2.0 rating and indicating that many faculty members believed that successful projects should be eligible for renewed funding.

[13] The only item rating 4.0 or more was the eligibility requirements (by participating faculty only).

**Half of the surveyed faculty members reported being "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with their experience in administering a project under the IAM Initiative. Fifteen percent of the surveyed faculty members characterized their experience as neutral, while 25 percent were "somewhat" or "very dissatisfied."**

The surveyed faculty members were divided in assessing their overall experience in administering a project under the IAM Initiative. Half (53 percent or n=21) reported being "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied", 15 percent (n=6) characterized their experience as neutral, while 25 percent (n=10) were "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied."

**Overall, the surveyed faculty members were satisfied with their experiences collaborating with their partner institutions.**

**The most common forms of co-operation reported by the faculty members were in the areas of credit recognition and transfer agreements, common curricular materials, and faculty or staff exchanges.**

**Most consortium collaboration consisted of informal agreements. The main exception was collaboration in the area of credit recognition and transfer agreements (where half of the agreements were formal).**

**To improve co-operation among partners, faculty listed the need for more contact with their partners and more money for travel and other consortium-building expenses.**

Overall, the surveyed faculty members expressed satisfaction with their experiences of collaborating with partner institutions. Almost half (48 percent or n=19) of them reported being "very satisfied" and over one-third (38 percent or n=15) were "somewhat satisfied." Four faculty members (10 percent) felt "somewhat dissatisfied" with the experience, and none rated their level of satisfaction as "very dissatisfied."[14]

The questionnaire of participating faculty members asked them to discuss the forms of collaboration their consortium engaged in. The key findings are:

- Collaboration (either formal or informal agreements) occurred most often in the following areas: credit recognition and transfer agreements (65 percent), common curricular materials (58 percent), and faculty or staff exchanges (56 percent).

- Collaboration with consortium partners tended to be through informal rather than formal agreements. The main exception was in the area or credit recognition and transfer agreements, where half of the agreements were formal. Consortia used informal agreements for all other areas of collaboration, if they collaborated at all.

[14] One faculty member was neutral, and one did not respond to the question.

- About 41 percent of the surveyed faculty members reported that no collaboration or discussion surrounding collaboration occurred in the areas of partnerships with non-academic organizations.

- Even though the program was not aimed at developing the collaboration in the areas of joint degree programs and common certification programs, more than two-thirds of the faculty members reported that it occurred during the project.

Generally, the surveyed faculty members were satisfied with all forms of partner co-operation included in the survey. On average, as shown in Table 5, the faculty members rated their satisfaction with various areas at 3.4 or above (using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "very unsatisfied" and 5 means "very satisfied"). The surveyed faculty members reported the most satisfaction in facilitating entry of students into the country and providing a quality experience for students. A close second was co-operation concerned with issues of academic credit (i.e. procedures for evaluating student work, academic credit transfers, schedules for exchanges).

Table 5 shows that ranking among the lowest satisfaction were the following:

- Co-operation in preparing students academically, culturally, and linguistically for the exchange ranked among the lowest in satisfaction, as did finding qualified students.

- Securing internships for students had the lowest satisfaction rating. This is an area where three-fourths of the faculty reported that they relied on the host institution for this assistance.

- Although developing course content and curricula were two of the most common forms of collaboration, the co-operation in these areas received relatively low satisfaction ratings.

| Table 5<br>Satisfaction with consortium co-operation (n= 40) | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Mean (1=very unsatisfied 5=Very satisfied)** | **N/A** |
| Facilitating entry of students into country | 4.4 | 3% |
| Providing a quality experience for students | 4.4 | 0% |
| Establishing procedures for evaluating student work | 4.2 | 17% |
| Negotiating academic credit transfers | 4.1 | 11% |
| Negotiating schedules for exchanges | 4.1 | 11% |
| Involving non-mobile students | 4.0 | 50% |
| Timely communication about consortium issues | 4.0 | 0% |
| Sharing resources, expertise, technology | 4.0 | 6% |
| Sufficient academic preparation for students | 3.9 | 0% |
| Recruiting qualified students | 3.8 | 3% |
| Sufficient cultural preparation for students | 3.8 | 6% |
| Sufficient language preparation for students | 3.6 | 19% |
| Developing course content and curricula | 3.6 | 25% |
| Securing internships for students | 3.4 | 47% |
| Source: Survey of project directors and educational partners<br>Note: Mean does not include "don't know," "no response," and "not applicable" answers. | | |

Faculty cited many ways to improve co-operation among consortium partners:

- more contact with partner (n=8);
- more money for travel or other consortium-building expenses (n=4);
- better management of projects (e.g., have two project directors, create more trust) (n=3);
- choosing partners with experience in co-operative projects (n=2); and
- more time to develop projects (n=2).

**About two-thirds of the surveyed students and faculty members indicated that orientation courses were offered to prepare students for the exchange. Most of the students who received the courses found them helpful.**

Sixty percent (n=24) of the surveyed faculty members reported that their projects provided students with orientation courses to prepare the students for the culture, politics, business climate, or educational system of the host country. Similarly, almost two-thirds (63 percent or n=71) of surveyed students reported that their home institutions provided orientation programs or meetings to prepare them for their IAM project. Eighty-seven percent (n=62 of 71) of these students found the orientation offerings at least "somewhat helpful".

The one-third (35 percent or n=40) of surveyed students who did not receive any orientation did not appear to have greatly missed it. A majority (55 percent or n=22 of 40) of them reported that they did not wish they had received any orientation. The results for the host institution were, for the most part, similar.

The types of contacts that students had with host institutions prior to going abroad took many forms, with most of the contacts being either written or e-mail contact rather than in-person contact. For over four-fifths (84 percent or n=95) of the students surveyed, their home institution assisted them in contacting their host institution prior to going abroad. While over one-third (39 percent or n=44) found the amount of prior contact "completely adequate," almost half (48 percent or n=54) felt that they "could have used more" contact, and 12 percent (n=14) of surveyed students considered their prior contact "totally inadequate."

**Most of the surveyed students reported being satisfied with the assistance they received from their home and host institutions for their exchange.**

The surveyed students were asked about the support they received from both their home and their host institutions in a range of areas. As shown in Table 6 (which provides the survey data for home institution supports):

- Most types of assistance received by the majority of surveyed students came from the home institution.
- Students generally reported that they received the supports they considered to be the most important. In most cases, the level of support received and the importance students placed on the support seem to track each other. The two main exceptions were *registration and course selection* for the host institution and *arranging living accommodations*. Students ranked these two types of assistance as being very important, but assistance in these areas was not as frequently provided as others they saw as less important.
- Most of the surveyed students reported being satisfied with the assistance they received, with almost all supports from both the home and host institution having a mean rating of 4.0 or higher (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "completely unsatisfied" and 5 means "very satisfied").

| Table 6<br>Supports received from home institution (n=113) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Received support % Yes | Important % Yes | Satisfaction Mean (5=very satisfied) |
| Obtaining financial aid | 95 | 84% | 96% | 4.3 |
| Academic recognition of credits or degrees earned | 93 | 82% | 98% | 4.3 |
| Getting information on host institution | 90 | 80% | 91% | 3.8 |
| Making academic contacts in host institution | 87 | 77% | 89% | 4.0 |
| Help with work placement or internship (n=30)* | 24 | 80% | 92% | 4.2 |
| Registration and course selection | 74 | 66% | 89% | 4.0 |
| Making social contacts in host institution | 64 | 57% | 75% | 3.6 |
| Getting information on host country | 62 | 55% | 81% | 3.7 |
| Arranging living accommodations | 57 | 50% | 98% | 4.2 |
| Obtaining a visa or other immigration issues | 57 | 50% | 88% | 4.2 |
| Obtaining health insurance | 34 | 30% | 74% | 4.0 |

Source: Survey of participating students
Note: "Don't know," "no response," and "not applicable" categories are not included.
* Only students in an internship or work placement answered this question.

The two areas where surveyed students were less likely to receive assistance from their home or host institution were:

- *obtaining health insurance* (Table 7 shows that 56 percent did not receive support from home institution; 50 percent received no support from host institution);
- *obtaining a visa or other immigration issues* (Table 7 shows that 29 percent received no support from home institution; 27 percent received no support from host institution).

| Table 7<br>Supports not received from home institution (n=113) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | N | No support given % Yes | Desire support % Yes |
| Obtaining health insurance | 63 | 56% | 48% |
| Arranging living accommodations | 48 | 43% | 65% |
| Making social contacts in host institution | 42 | 37% | 50% |
| Getting information on host country | 40 | 35% | 38% |
| Obtaining a visa or other immigration issues | 33 | 29% | 61% |
| Help with work placement or internship (n=30)* | 6 | 20% | 67% |
| Registration and course selection | 20 | 18% | 55% |
| Making academic contacts in host institution | 19 | 17% | 58% |
| Getting information on host institution | 16 | 14% | 81% |
| Obtaining financial aid | 11 | 10% | 64% |
| Academic recognition of credits or degrees earned | 6 | 5% | 83% |

Source: Survey of participating students
Note: "Don't know," "no response," and "not applicable" categories are not included.
* Only students in an internship or work placement answered this question.

**Almost two-thirds of the surveyed students who took language preparation courses believe that the courses met their needs, while 29 percent believe that the courses did not meet their language needs.**

**Almost half of the surveyed faculty believe that sufficient language preparation was offered, while a quarter believe that the language training was insufficient.**

The current provision of language preparation in IAM projects is not clear from the survey data. This may be due to the small samples, particularly in the student survey. Table 8 compares the student and faculty survey results.

**Table 8**
**Language preparation[15]**

| | Faculty (n=40) | Students (n=113) |
|---|---|---|
| Didn't prepare; host country used student's first language | 13% | 35% |
| Didn't prepare; student was fluent in the country's language | 23% | 22% |
| Student took preparation courses for credit | 30% | 12% |
| Student took preparation courses, but not for credit | 40% | 15% |
| Student wasn't fluent but didn't take language course | - | 15% |
| No language preparation courses were provided | 25% | - |

Source: Survey of participating students and survey of project directors and educational partners
Note: "Don't know" and "no response" answers are not included.

The surveyed students reported an average length of 21 weeks for the language preparation courses. The median was 11 weeks and the range was from less than one week (3 percent or n=1) to 104 weeks (3 percent or n=1). The student survey also indicates that the IAM projects either fully funded language preparation or did not cover it at all.

Almost two-thirds (65 percent or n=20 of 31) of the surveyed students who took language preparation courses believe that the course met their needs for the exchange project. Twenty-nine percent (n=9) thought that their language needs were not met by the course, and 3 percent (n=1) thought the preparation exceeded what they needed for the exchange. Of the students who were not fluent in the host country's language (either as a second or first language) and went on their exchange without any language preparation (n=17), 6 percent (n=1) believed that the lack of preparation caused difficulties during the IAM project.

Almost half of the surveyed faculty members (48 percent or n=19) believe that students receive sufficient language preparation for their study abroad, compared to a quarter (23 percent or n=9) who find the language preparation to be insufficient.[16] To improve language preparation, two (5 percent) of the surveyed faculty suggested providing funding for language instruction, and two (5 percent) others proposed selecting students sooner to provide more time for language instruction.

[15] Some of the categories were not asked in both surveys.
[16] The remaining faculty members either did not respond (18 percent) to the question, or their partner institutions used the students' first language (13 percent).

**According to the surveyed students and faculty, the students experienced few problems with getting academic credit for their studies or work abroad.**

The evaluation conducted by the European Union of its Co-operation Programme in Higher Education and Training between the European Community and Canada (the EC-Canada Programme evaluation) concluded that it was important to plan students' academic studies or their work/internship prior to their going abroad. Likewise, other research examined by the literature review showed that ensuring credit recognition and transfer of credits earned abroad is important to the success of academic mobility programs. Previous studies indicated that students might not participate if they were uncertain about receiving academic credit for their work abroad.

The surveys of participating students and faculty members appear to show that the IAM projects in both programs provided advance planning for their students' exchanges. Over four-fifths of the students reported that they planned their academic studies (87 percent or n=93) or internship (87 percent or n=26) at least partly before going abroad.[17] Similarly, two-thirds (68 percent or n=27) of the faculty members indicated that students' academic study programs were decided upon before the students left their home institution, and one-fifth (20 percent or n=8) noted that students began this planning at the home institution, even if they completed it abroad. Of those faculty members who had students in internships (n=21), 76 percent (n=16) had students do at least some of the planning at their home institution before going abroad.

Both surveys also appear to show that students do not experience much difficulty with getting academic credit for their studies or work done abroad. Eighty-seven percent (n=98) of the surveyed students reported receiving academic credit at their home institution for the courses or work they did in the IAM project. For 88 percent (n=86 of 98) of them, the credit was equivalent to what they would have earned had the study/work been done at their home institution. Of the 15 students who did not receive academic credit for their work, 13 did not request academic credit.

Similarly, almost two-thirds (68 percent or n=27) of the surveyed faculty members reported that their mobile students enrolled in courses that would earn them credit at their home institution. Of the faculty whose students received academic credit, over three-quarters (71 percent or n=25) reported that their students received equivalent credit for their courses abroad.

Three faculty members (8 percent) reported that a minority of their students had difficulty receiving academic credit at their home institution for the study or work done abroad. They noted several reasons why the students did not receive credit. Most of their reasons were institutional and not the responsibility of the student, such as the structures of the national education systems being too different, the grading systems being too different, a lack of coordination between institutions, and the host institution failing to provide sufficient information on the program abroad.

[17] The percentages are based on the students who participated in each type of exchange, which explains why the percentage of internship students is the same as for academic studies students while the numbers of students are very different.

**The project information collected by project directors and educational partners was most often used for informal evaluations of the project and for HRDC's annual reports.**

Project directors and educational partners reported collecting various kinds of project information. Because of the high "don't know" response rate, only the answers given by project directors, who most often handle the administrative work of the projects, are provided in Table 9. The results show that financial information and students' experiences are the records most often kept by project directors.

**Table 9**
**Information collection reported by project directors (n=25)**

| | Yes – Project directors | |
|---|---|---|
| Students' experiences | 21 | 84% |
| Financial information | 21 | 84% |
| Project-sponsored activities | 16 | 64% |
| Project's impacts | 12 | 48% |

Source: Survey of project directors and educational partners

The more detailed analysis in the technical report shows that less than a majority of all the surveyed faculty members (project directors and educational partners) reported collecting information on the project's impacts on the post-secondary institution, students, faculty, the department, etc.

The information collected by project directors and educational partners is most often used for informal evaluations of the project and for HRDC's annual reports. A third (33 percent or n=13 of 40) of the surveyed faculty members reported using the information in formal evaluations of the project.

## 3.3 Short-Term Benefits

The formative evaluation examined three evaluation issues regarding short-term benefits:

- Has IAM encouraged international exchange and co-operation among Canadian higher education institutions (universities and colleges)? Specifically, in regard to:
  - setting up new multilateral partnerships between educational institutions and enhancing existing ones;
  - skills development and international academic work credit;
  - the development of common and/or shared curricula; and
  - the exchange of expertise and knowledge in new developments in higher education and training, including distance learning?
- Has IAM improved the quality of human resource development among mobile and non-mobile students at participating institutions? Specifically, in regard to:

- increasing students' knowledge of languages, cultures, and institutions;
- providing affordable access to an "internationalized" curricula;
- providing work placements/internships in a "foreign" milieu; and
- partnerships beyond the educational field to include businesses, professional associations, public authorities, etc.?

- Are the partnerships created through the IAM program continuing beyond the program funding? What mechanisms are being used to promote sustainability?

## *Perceived Institutional Effects*

**The surveyed faculty members rated IAM's contribution to establishing partnerships and enhancing existing partnerships as important to their institution. However, faculty members wanted IAM to do more to enhance existing partnerships by allowing continued funding of successful IAM projects.**

When asked about the IAM Initiative's contributions to their institution, the surveyed faculty members considered the most important contribution to be assistance in providing exchange experiences to students and assistance in establishing new partnerships or enhancing existing ones. Specific types of co-operation, such as forming partnerships with non-academic organizations, developing common curricula, and exchanging knowledge in new technologies scored lower in importance.

As noted in section 3.2, faculty members wanted IAM to do more to enhance existing partnerships by allowing continued funding of successful IAM projects.

**The surveyed faculty members reported that most consortium collaboration was done informally, rather than by formal agreement. Formal collaboration occurred most often in the areas of academic credit recognition and transfer agreements, common curriculum materials, common courses or course modules, and faculty or staff exchanges.**

**Eighty percent of the surveyed faculty members reported reaching agreements for credit recognition, and half considered the agreements reached on credits to be capable of serving future students.**

Most consortium collaboration consisted of informal agreements. Formal agreements were most common for credit recognition and transfer agreements, common curricular materials, common courses or course modules, and faculty or staff exchanges. These are also the areas that faculty members considered the most successful.

Eighty percent (n=32) of the surveyed faculty members reported reaching agreements for credit recognition. Half (50 percent or n=16 of 32) considered the agreements reached on credits to be capable of serving future exchange students. Twelve respondents indicated that their agreements would only serve the current exchange project.

Seven faculty members reported using some form of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The ECTS, developed for the European Community's ERASMUS program for student mobility, is a voluntary, decentralized system of credit agreements that is based on institutional co-operation and trust. One advantage in adopting a system like the ECTS is that it sets in place a system that could potentially benefit other students.

The surveyed students reported little difficulty in obtaining academic credit (usually equivalent) for their studies or work abroad. The figures appear comparable to the EC-Canada Programme evaluation results.[18]

**About two-thirds (68 percent) of the surveyed faculty members reported that collaboration with their partner institutions has continued after IAM funding ceased. The continued collaboration occurs mostly in the areas of student and faculty exchanges.**

**Collaboration in common curricular materials and courses appears to decline substantially after the funding ends.**

About two-thirds (68 percent or n=27) of the surveyed faculty members reported that the collaboration with their partners has continued since their IAM funding ended. Table 10 shows that almost one-quarter (23 percent or n=9) of the surveyed faculty members consider their collaborative activity to have increased; however, a slightly greater number (28 percent or n=11) believe that their collaboration had declined. Three (8 percent) of the surveyed faculty members reported that the collaboration ceased after the IAM funding ended.

**Table 10**
**Continuation of collaboration with partners (n=40)**

| | # | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yes, but collaboration has declined | 11 | 28% |
| Yes, collaboration has increased | 9 | 23% |
| Yes, collaboration has continued at the same level | 7 | 18% |
| No, collaboration has ceased | 3 | 8% |
| DK/NR | 9 | 23% |

Source: Survey of project directors and educational partners

The types of activities where collaboration has continued are mostly in the area of student and faculty exchanges (as shown in Table 11), which are also the areas where faculty members reported the most collaboration during the project. Another area that appears to be successful in continuing collaboration is distance learning, where six of the surveyed faculty members reported continued collaboration (which is about half of faculty who reported collaborating in this area in their projects). In contrast, the two other areas of common curricular materials and common courses appear to experience a substantial drop-off in collaboration after funding ends, despite the fact that they are areas of substantial co-operation during the projects.

[18] Ninety-two percent (92 percent) of EC partners said that students received formal certification at their home institution for their study abroad in Canada.

| Table 11<br>Types of continued collaboration (n= 40) | | |
|---|---|---|
| | # | % |
| Student mobility | 18 | 45% |
| Faculty or staff exchanges | 11 | 28% |
| Joint faculty research | 9 | 23% |
| Distance learning courses | 6 | 15% |
| Common curricular materials | 5 | 13% |
| Common courses or course modules | 5 | 13% |
| Partnerships with business | 3 | 8% |
| Team teaching opportunities | 3 | 8% |
| Other | 3 | 8% |
| DK/NR | 13 | 33% |

Source: Survey of project directors and educational partners
Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%

Faculty members listed money as one of the primary factors that detracted from project sustainability. Twelve faculty members said the lack of funds hurts sustainability of projects. Other reasons cited were: "too much paperwork," "personnel change, different goals among directors," "differences in professional/academic standards between institutions," and "will of the partners under the constraints of HRDC's program." Two faculty members noted factors that contributed to sustainability: "ongoing personal relationships, shared interests, trust," and "collaboration among professors allowed for the elaboration of a project with an international profile."

## *Perceived Student Benefits*

**Seventy-five percent of the surveyed students agreed with the statement that their IAM experience has helped them with other academic programs.**

**Almost half of the surveyed students believed that their academic progress abroad was greater than it would have been at their home institution.**

Seventy-five percent (n=85) of surveyed students agreed with the statement that their IAM experience has helped them with other academic programs.

The surveyed faculty members also commented on the effects of the exchange experience on students' academic careers. On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 5 means "strongly agree"), faculty rated academic effects the highest (as compared to professional or personal effects) with a mean rating of 4.6.[19]

Surveyed students were also asked to compare their academic progress abroad with what they think it would have been at home. The results were as follows:

- Almost half (46 percent or n=52) of surveyed students believed that their academic progress abroad was greater than it would have been at their home institution.

[19] Twenty-one percent of faculty surveyed either did not respond or indicated that they were uncertain about any effects.

- Forty percent (n=45) characterized their academic progress during the IAM project as "about the same" as it would have been at home.

- Fourteen percent (n=16) of surveyed students thought their academic progress abroad was less than it would have been at home.

These results seem less positive than the findings of the literature review. More than half of the students in two other studies (the Study Abroad Evaluation Program and the ERASMUS evaluation) rated their academic progress abroad as greater than it would have been at home. More than 80 percent of EC students in the EC-Canada Programme characterized their progress as greater. The small sample size of the student survey conducted for the IAM evaluation precludes inferences to the population of participating students; however, this may be an area for further study.

The literature review also noted that studies differ on whether students experience graduation delays due to participation in student mobility programs. The student survey conducted for the IAM evaluation found that 21 percent (n=24) of the students reported that they had to prolong their time to graduation because of their participation in the IAM project. The remaining 79 percent (n=89) said that their participation in IAM did not lengthen their time to graduation.

**The majority of the surveyed students believe that their language skills improved and that they have increased knowledge of other cultures and improved knowledge of international issues. The surveyed students also reported that their exchange experiences helped them become better able to adapt to new situations and meet life's challenges.**

**These results appear to confirm the literature review findings that students believe that they benefit personally from the exchange experience.**

The studies examined by the literature review found that students in international exchanges reported an increase in their foreign language proficiency. For the IAM evaluation, surveyed students whose host country did not use their first language (n=73) were asked to assess their foreign language skills after they participated in the IAM project. A majority (84 percent or n=61) of these surveyed students believed that their foreign language skills improved during the exchange. Three respondents said that their language skills would have improved just as much in ordinary classes.[20]

Also, the results of the student survey appear to align with the literature review findings that students tend to place more emphasis on the personal effects of their exchange experiences than on the academic or professional effects.[21] Over 90 percent of surveyed students either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the exchange experience had the following personal effects:

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[20] Eight percent (n=9) of surveyed students answered "not applicable" to the question.

[21] For the studies discussed in the literature review, students placed a greater emphasis on personal effects by considering their most positive professional effects to be in personal characteristics, such as personal development, work style, and social skills.

- improved their knowledge of international issues (96 percent or n=108);
- helped them better adapt to new situations (94 percent or n=106);
- helped them be better prepared to meet life's challenges (95 percent or n=107);
- helped them better understand other cultures (93 percent or n=105); and
- gave them contacts they will keep for years (92 percent or n=104).

The surveyed faculty members also agreed with many of the above personal effects (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 means "strongly agree"):

- students are more sensitive to other cultures (mean of 4.5);
- students are more mature and self-confident (mean of 4.5); and
- students are more flexible when encountering new situations (mean of 4.3).

**Most of the surveyed student participants now employed full-time reported that their job is related to the studies or work they did in the IAM project, and that they are using skills learned in the IAM project in their jobs.**

**Most of the surveyed students believe that their IAM experience enhanced their professional mobility, increased their interest in working abroad, increased their interest in international business, enhanced their employability, and affected their career choice. Faculty agreed that, after their IAM experiences, students are in a better position to conduct international business and they will probably apply their IAM experiences to their employment.**

The student survey sought information on possible professional effects of the IAM project. While most of those surveyed were still full-time students, the following results are from surveyed student participants now employed full-time (n=60):

- Eighty-two percent (n=49) reported that their job is related to the studies or work they did in the IAM project;
- Eighty-eight percent (n=53) believe that they are using skills learned in the IAM project in their jobs;[22]
- Almost half (48 percent or n=29) reported that their job has an international aspect;[23] and

[22] This percentage appears to be much higher than in other studies that consider this issue. For a discussion of those studies, please see the Literature Review Report.

[23] In the literature on student mobility, the evaluations of exchanges found that a considerable number of former study abroad students did not find jobs with an international focus. According to the literature, whether alumni/alumna of the study abroad programs found employment with an international focus appears to depend on two things: their academic field and the status of their host country (such as the size of its population and its economy and whether it had an internationally important language).

- Of the surveyed students who used a foreign language in their host country (n=36), over a third (36 percent or n=13) said that they use the language of their host country in their job.

A majority of students "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they learned job-specific skills that will enhance their employability and had experiences that affected their career choice.

Perceived professional effects that received the highest level of agreement from surveyed students were: enhanced professional mobility (91 percent or n=103 "agreed" or "strongly agreed") and increased interest in working abroad (88 percent or n=100 "agreed" or "strongly agreed").

The surveyed faculty members also agreed that students experienced certain professional effects. On a scale of 1 to 5, (where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 5 means "strongly agree"), the faculty members rated the statements that after the exchange, *students are in a better position to conduct international business* and they *will probably apply their IAM experience to their employment* with mean ratings of 4.3.[24]

**Overall, more than two-thirds of the surveyed students were "very satisfied" with their exchange experience. Only one percent of the surveyed students were not satisfied, and none were "completely dissatisfied".**

On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 means "completely dissatisfied" and 5 means "very satisfied") students rated their overall experience in the exchange with an average rating of 4.7. Over two-thirds (68 percent or n=77) of surveyed students were "very satisfied" with their exchange experience. One percent (n=1) of surveyed students were not satisfied. None of the surveyed students reported being "completely dissatisfied" with their experience.

Students gave a variety of reasons for their satisfaction with the exchange experience, but a few of the highlights are as follows:

- Cultural and personal experiences received the most comments from students. Some examples of what students said include:
  - "The people that I've met showed me so many different things about life – more than academic, it is the way I look at people and life."
  - "I learned a lot, I met a lot of new people, I have a different way of seeing life."
  - "I think it was a worthwhile experience to learn and study in another culture. I think I learned a lot in making my way in another culture."
  - "Fabulous opportunity to make friends and learn about culture."
  - "Invaluable cultural experience."

[24] Twenty-one percent of faculty surveyed either did not respond or indicated that they were uncertain about using their experiences in their employment, and almost one-third (31 percent) were either uncertain or did not respond to the statement about international business.

- Academic reasons for student satisfaction with the exchange included improved language skills (n=12), exposure to different academic approaches (n=10), and that the project was generally academically rewarding (n=9).
  - "It was a great opportunity to learn that the Canadian way isn't the only way."
  - "It was an eye-opener for me to see how other government services operated and how we in Canada could improve our government services."
  - "It was certainly useful to learn about what other people were studying and their different perspectives."
  - "It gave me the opportunity to learn about the issues that are relevant to my career choice in an international context."
- A few students (n=5) mentioned career or employment effects.
  - "It gave me better employment opportunities."
  - "I got a job immediately after the project in Mexico."

**Non-mobile students became involved in the projects in many ways, but primarily through taking courses developed with the partner institution. Non-mobile students benefited from the international dimension of the jointly developed courses.**

Fourteen faculty members (35 percent) had non-mobile students from their institution involved in the project. [25] About one-third (36 percent or n=5 of 14) had to limit the number of non-mobile students that could participate, largely because the project had a pre-determined limit on the total number of students that could participate. As Table 12 shows, non-mobile students became involved in the projects in many ways, but primarily through taking courses developed with the partner institution.

**Table 12**
**Forms of non-mobile participation (n=14)**

| | # | % |
|---|---|---|
| Took course developed with partner institution | 10 | 71% |
| Undertook joint projects/activities with students at partner institutions | 7 | 50% |
| Undertook projects/other activities with exchange students from partner institution | 6 | 43% |
| Buddied with visiting students from partner institutions | 5 | 36% |
| Took a course/module given by visiting foreign faculty | 4 | 29% |
| DK/NR | 1 | 7% |

Source: Survey of project directors and educational partners
Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Totals may sum to more than 100%.
Base: Faculty members who had non-mobile students in their project.

[25] However, no non-mobile students participated in the student survey.

# 4. Methodological Issues for the Summative Evaluations

This section discusses a range of methodological issues for future evaluations of the IAM Initiative. The first part of the section highlights the following themes:

- creating a valid comparison group for the IAM is unlikely;
- outcomes must be more clearly defined;
- attribution is unlikely; and
- logistics must be managed.

With these themes as a backdrop, the latter part of this section outlines a potential design for summative evaluations of the IAM programs.

## 4.1 Creating a Valid Comparison Group for the IAM is Unlikely

In evaluation, as in science, comparing outcomes for those who receive a program with those who do not is the accepted method for inferring incremental impacts of a program. However, it is very unlikely that a valid comparison group could be obtained for summative evaluations of the IAM Initiative. The approaches reviewed below are either not possible in the case of IAM or would require costly coordination and the participation of many institutions.

### *Randomization*

The ideal method for creating a valid comparison is randomization. By randomly assigning subjects to a program or treatment group, it is possible to ensure that there are no statistically significant differences between the treatment group and the control group of non-participants. This method assumes that the sample sizes of the two groups are large enough and are drawn from a large population. Any observed differences can then be attributed to program interventions. Randomization is rarely possible in policy settings or socio-economic program settings, however, because ethical and political concerns require that programs be available to all.

The central problem with using actual participants and non-participants, instead of randomly assigned subjects, is that those who apply and are accepted into programs (participants) may differ from those who do not apply or are not accepted (non-participants). For example, participating students may have superior grades or more desire to travel abroad. Therefore, observed differences between IAM participants and non-participants could be due to pre-program differences between these two groups.

## Using Secondary Data Sources

Another approach is to consider whether it is possible to create a useful comparison exercise between program participants and non-participants using secondary data sources. For example, if program participants and non-participants have drivers' licenses, consistent measures such as age and gender may be obtained for both the participant and non-participant groups. Health insurance databases and school records could also be used to generate information on the two groups. These "background" variables can then be used in multivariate analysis to control for differences between the two groups, with a "dummy" variable inserted into the statistical model to capture any effects arising from the program. However, there are several limitations to this approach:

- A "complete" set of background variables must be collected to control for all possible impacts on outcomes caused by individual attributes. Few databases offer a complete set of data, requiring researchers to try to assemble information from several sources.
- It is difficult to know what constitutes a complete set of background variables, and one always wonders whether a crucial variable has been omitted that could account for the observed differences in outcomes.
- Increasing the number of control variables to a multivariate specification produces a range of statistical difficulties.[26]

## "Matching" Participants to Non-Participants

Yet another approach to the construction of a comparison group is to "match" participants to non-participants based on attributes believed to determine the outcomes. For example, a participant who is single, a student, aged 19, female, in engineering, and from Alberta would have a comparison group "match" who has all these same attributes. Clearly, matching on a wider range of variables increases the power of the comparison process, but raises the data demands because exact matching requires the same information on both participants and non-participants. A less exact approach is to match on ranges, such as an age range of 18 to 21, rather than on the exact age of 19. Taking the match-on-ranges approach lessens the data demands but reduces the power of the test.

[26] These include multicollinearity and simultaneous equation bias. The latter occurs when a variable on the right hand of the regression model is also determined by the dependent (left hand variable). Both these problems reduce the precision of the statistical estimation and invalidate the model.

### *Using a Group Norm Approach*

Finally, one can compare the average experience of program participants with a group norm by using, for example, the National Graduates Survey (NGS). For this method, it is necessary to select a relevant outcome variable for the comparison. Of course, this approach completely ignores the problem of self-selection. To increase the precision of the test, HRDC could arrange with Statistics Canada to extract a sub-sample from the NGS that more closely resembles the IAM participants than the total sample, but this would be time-consuming. Another approach is a national survey of universities that surveys undergraduate students. It may be possible to include several questions on this survey to provide a reference point for the IAM.

### *Implications for IAM Evaluations*

All of the above approaches are either not possible or would require costly co-ordination and the participation of many institutions. For example, creating a comparison group from secondary data sources for the IAM will require co-operation from the participating schools. Students typically provide a wealth of family and background data on the applications for admission and financial assistance. As an IAM project is approved, HRDC would need to arrange with school administrations to secure information that would support the identification of a comparison group. Registrars and college or university records would need to be approached to identify non-participating students to include in the comparison group. Further, all students (participants and non-participants) would have to consent to the collection of their personal data and would need to be offered incentives to encourage their inclusion in follow-up surveys.

Also, arrangements for comparison groups would need to be made with each participating school and that would be too expensive to be feasible. Furthermore, few universities and colleges would be willing to share student information to create an effective comparison group.

Other reference groups, such as the National Graduates Survey pose few questions relevant for testing the goals of the IAM.

## 4.2 Outcome Variables Must be More Clearly Defined

The IAM Initiative has intended outcomes for institutions and students. In the case of institutions, project directors and educational partners could report on outcomes for their institutions and their own careers in follow-up surveys that occur within a year or two of the project. By then, most of the institutional and professional outcomes should be apparent to participating faculty.

The evaluation of student outcomes is more problematic, however. Student outcomes, such as career and other gains, will be difficult to detect because of the problems involved in creating valid comparison groups and the complexity of defining sensible,

long-term outcome measures. Most university/college graduates will find employment and, on average, will experience career progress in the form of higher wages and increased responsibility. The question is whether IAM participants show a statistically significant advantage in these areas. Therefore, establishing a norm from the comparison group is essential. If one confines outcomes to income, however, the net differences may be small. Selecting an outcome that reflects a goal of the IAM Initiative, such as success in pursuing a career related to international trade or other "global" careers, requires that non-participants who select these careers are also identified and monitored. Identifying these non-participants while they are at college or university will be challenging.

Also, most students participate in IAM projects during the third or fourth year of their post-secondary education. Some go on to pursue graduate or professional training, and this training can often last for five years or more after they have completed their undergraduate degrees. Although, their experience with the IAM Initiative may affect their choice of post-graduate training and eventually may pay dividends in their careers, these sorts of effects can occur many years after program participation.

## 4.3 Attribution is Unlikely

The IAM Initiative, like most international exchange programs for post-secondary students, is intended to increase the chance that a student will become engaged in a career demanding awareness and experience with foreign cultures. However, it is unlikely that initiatives such as IAM will have a measurable impact until a student has been in the workforce for several years. It is also likely that a wide range of other factors influence career choice and progress, while the influence of a student's IAM experience can be considered modest or finite and of declining importance as an individual matures and works up the career ladder.

Baseline data and comparing participants to the "average" student at an institution is the route to successfully controlling selection bias. In turn, this means that the program may wish to consider collecting detailed information on students at the outset of their participation.

## 4.4 Logistics Must be Managed

Securing survey responses from students and faculty members will always present major challenges. Students are highly mobile and, for a large fraction of participants, address or phone information will become out of date as early as three months after the project. Because students participating in IAM projects are usually in their third or fourth year, few will have the same address and phone number after two years. This has three implications for the research:

- Follow-up surveys need to commence very soon after program completion.

- Collateral information on the student's permanent address, family contact or a friend who will know his/her whereabouts is critical because, without it, any long-term follow-up will surely fail.
- Most importantly, the address and collateral location information might be collected at the time of participant application for all students and faculty. This will improve the possibility of conducting follow-up surveys.
- Also, it is preferable to collect at the time of student participant application. Failure to secure consent will require a convoluted process that involves an initial mailing and then awaiting the consent card. Experience here shows the futility of that approach.

Project directors present some different challenges. Several refused outright to participate in the formative evaluation, citing the administrative burdens of previous reports and the fact that they had completed a lengthy questionnaire associated with an audit of the program. The length of the questionnaire discouraged some from participating.

The academic cycle produces optimum windows for academic surveys April and December at exam time are best. October to November, January to March, and May are reasonable times for surveys of faculty. Summer is very poor.

## 4.5 Suggestions for the Summative Evaluation

With these four themes as background, it is possible to outline a methodology for the summative evaluation of the IAM Initiative. Given the problems associated with comparison groups and the difficulty in inferring attribution, the summative evaluation may wish to focus on collecting information on short-term outcomes and how the project has assisted the post-secondary institution to increase its capacity to participate in international exchange programs.

Also, *project applications, student applications,* and *project reports* would be better used to anchor the evaluation. This approach would reduce the level of effort needed for follow-up surveys by making better use of the application process and by collecting key information from Project Directors in follow-up project reports. For example, the survey of Project Directors and Educational Partners can be eliminated entirely.

The proposed lines of evidence for the summative evaluations are discussed below.

### *Administrative Data*

Administrative data consists of the following data collection and analysis activities:

- Project application (submitted by Project Director);
- Student/participant application;
- Project report submitted by Project Director at conclusion of the project; and

- Program database development and annual reporting.

The *project application* could provide information about the proposed project as well as the participating faculty. It is important to collect attributes of the Project Director and Educational Partners such as:

- Other research grants (general and those associated with foreign research);
- Number of graduate students supervised;
- Academic rank, years of employment at present and all academic institutions; and
- Highest degree and year of graduation.

The standard applications for all students could be designed to collect the following information:

- Name, current address and phone;
- Secondary contact information (name address of parent or other who will know where the student will be);
- Current academic program, grade point;
- Work history (last 3 positions);
- Experience with international travel;
- Capacity in additional language;
- Expectations for the program;
- Personal and family socio-economic status (occupation of parents, family income, etc.); and
- Informed consent release.

The onus for ensuring that all student and educational partner applications are complete could be placed on the Project Directors. In effect, the application function will provide partial information normally collected by follow-up surveys.

*Reports by Project Directors* submitted at the conclusion of the project could supply a range of information on activities and short-term outcomes from the perspective of the participating faculty members. This includes number of students, duration of stay, total costs incurred in the exchange, all sources of funding not covered by the IAM (i.e., cross-supported by other grant funds), activities in the project, etc. Project Directors

could collect input from educational partners using a standard questionnaire.[27] This will ensure that the experience of all educational institutions is included in the report.

The IAM program could develop a *standard reporting template* with an instruction guide to increase uniformity of response. Also, the annual report could include feedback from Educational Partners on the contribution made by the IAM project for their students and institutions. The Project Director can submit all feedback using the same template.

A *program database* could be developed using the project and student applications and Project Directors' report. This needs to be a proper relational database that can support queries and annual reporting for the program.

The proposed approach relies both on the creation of a standard project report template and on Project Directors supplying additional information on the Educational Partners at the conclusion of the project. This raises the burden on Project Directors during the project, but eliminates the need to participate in a follow-up survey. IAM could consider allowing a small portion of project funds (i.e. $2000) to be used to assist with this administrative burden.

## Surveys of Students

IAM may want to consider using application forms to eliminate the need for an entry survey. The follow-up survey of students could then be configured in three waves:

***First Wave:*** Students would complete an *exit survey* within a month of their return or completion of the program (and before classes end in April). The questionnaire would collect much of the information included in the survey used in this formative evaluation.

This survey must request confirming details on the secondary contact (permanent address) for follow-up surveys. The questionnaire could contain a page (release) that the student signs indicating their agreement for HRDC to solicit student co-ordinates from the secondary contact.

***Second Wave:*** A second follow-up survey would be completed a year after students return. HRDC would initiate the process by sending a letter to the secondary contact (with a copy of the release signed by the student) requesting the current phone number for the student be provided (to a toll free line). A follow-up call may be needed to collect this information. The student survey would then proceed using a telephone interview and would collect information of current educational and labour market activity.

***Third Wave:*** Subsequent surveys are possible, with periodic re-contacting of the secondary contact, although attrition will likely increase over time.

The survey data can be added to the program database to support an integrated information system for the summative evaluation. Participants may be cross-referenced to

[27] In general, more information value exists in collecting information from Project Directors than Educational Partners. Project Directors usually have the most information and typically will have more contact with students and the institutions in other countries.

the project and vice versa to support analysis of outcomes by project type, and even Project Director attribute and institution. Changing the follow-up questions on the surveys will impede longitudinal analysis and will use the program database to support the summative evaluation.

The formative evaluation also provided a few important lessons learned in the execution of student surveys. For example, prize draws are a useful incentive to encourage students to participate in the research. Questionnaires must be concise and brief. All the questionnaires used in the evaluation were too long and attempted to collect much "nice to have" as opposed to "need to have" information. Also, if the academic cycle is not taken into account when scheduling the surveys, the response rates will be very poor. This is important for all phases of data collection for the summative evaluation.

## Qualitative Data

***Key Informant Interviews:*** Key informant interviews with program managers, university/college representatives (such as Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and Association of Canadian Community Colleges), and senior management within HRDC provide important program details and context. As an option, key informant interviews may also be conducted with selected Project Directors, but it is likely that few will be able to offer additional information beyond that provided in the project report.

***Case Studies and Focus groups:*** Case studies and focus groups with students can offer useful insights into program operation. Case studies would also be useful for obtaining greater insight into projects with non-mobile students. For example, interviews with Project Directors, focus groups with participating students, and a review of curricula would constitute a useful case study.

Case studies and focus groups must be conducted within a narrow time frame (i.e. immediately after students have returned). In particular, focus groups must be convened before April 1 because students disperse immediately after classes have concluded. Missing the narrow window for scheduling the focus groups with students would, however, erode this as a line of evidence.

# 5. Conclusion

Small sample sizes limit any inference from the survey results to the larger population of IAM participants or unsuccessful applicants. Some tentative conclusions are possible, however, based on the literature review and the information gathered by the formative evaluation.

- The concept of international student exchange is widely supported within the academic community. Both faculty and students endorse the concept as do studies of international exchange in other countries.
- It is difficult to identify outcomes in terms of changes to career choice or career progress, but most students believe the experience will be beneficial.
- Consideration could be given to allowing faculty to apply more than once. The program will benefit from having experienced faculty run projects. To ensure access to a wider number of faculty members, the program could limit the number of awards within any five-year period.
- Unsuccessful project applicants require additional feedback. These applicants should be viewed as a resource, that with some coaching, could become proponents of successful projects.